





"For Love,"

Mark the beautiful curve of the lady's back. It may be simple to look at but it is extremely difficult to execute with the necessary effect and emphasis. But then, Chughtai is a connoisseur in the flowing lines which characterise oriental painting; he knows exactly when to use them, and where to put them.

The graceful posture is complemented—as it were—by the curving smoke of the lamp, and the handle of the lamp itself, which curls over with a flourish.

Apart from the perfection of its drawing the picture is painted with a kind of knowing simplicity. The blend of pink, mauve, and brown, would have become garish in the hands of a less experienced artist. The head and a portion of the drapery is lit up to indicate that there is a glow from the lamp, but the illumination is so soft that it does not clash with the subdued and rather mysterious colouring of the painting.



CSL

CHUGHTAI'S PAINTINGS

THIRTY-NINE PLATES IN ALL

THIRTY-SIX PLATES IN COLOURS, REST IN MONOCHROMES

FOREWORD

BY

Dr. JAMES H. COUSINS, D. Litt.

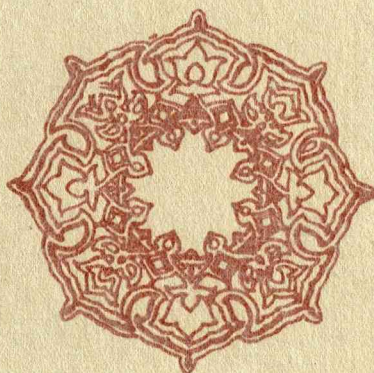
INTRODUCTION

AND

CRITICAL ANNOTATIONS

BY

Mrs. RAZIA SIRAJ-UD-DIN



LAHORE

(INDIA)

JAHANGIR BOOK CLUB

CHABUK SAWARAN



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MASTERPIECE

—The heavens and the earth were finished

—The Creator paused and surveyed

His creation ; He wished to name what was His masterpiece.

All the worlds lay before him

But He could not name what was His masterpiece

—Then said the Creator, Let him whom We made in Our image
do this work for Us

Thus it fell to Man to name what was His masterpiece.

The Angels bowed low before this honour done to Man

And a Light spread far and wide and gathered fast and quick over
the entire cosmos.

The chosen one is still immersed in the work entrusted to him

—In spite of all his strivings and efforts, out of the creation of his
creator, he has not been able to name what is His masterpiece.

CHUGHTAI



FOREWORD

by

Dr. JAMES H. COUSINS, D.Litt.

SOME good people, when they see certain pictures of modern artists, recall some two or three colour-prints that they have seen, and sagely remark, with a trace of disparagement : "Ah, Japanese influence." As if a great grandmother of the arts of Asia should be rebuked for preserving some trace of resemblance to her children's children. Wider knowledge knows that the matter is the other way round, and that Utamaro's ladies are lineal descendants of the Shakti of India, thinned, coiffed and costumed by the temperament and climate of Japan.

The same good people or others have been heard to remark in front of one of Rahman Chughtai's pictures : "Ah, Persian influence." Persian surely, for the very reason that Chughtai is a Persian of the lineage of the Tartar-Mughals and of the family of the master-builders of the Pearl Mosque of Delhi and the Taj Mahal of Agra.

It does not, of course, follow that, because Chughtai is in blood Persian, he should therefore paint Persian. Some of the masters of Mughal art in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were pucca Hindus, and some of the Indians to-day who ape a foreign art are not pucca anything, but in the case of Chughtai it just does follow. His cultural tradition takes fresh birth in him, with a difference due to passing time and personality.

So far as Chughtai's art is concerned, India to him might as well be India of Akbar. It is perhaps as well for us that it is not. If it were, he might have created for us some other, and it might be some less delectable world than the Persian world of dreams that is evoked in these lovely pages ; for he belongs to the tribe of romantics whose caravan is never fully content unless when it is camped by the river of yesterday or to-morrow. Another of the tribe, the English poet Keats, took refuge from his time in a Grecian world of his own making. But

Chughtai carries his refuge about with him, and sets it visibly in our midst with the fine gesture of invitation to enter and enjoy which is made in this volume.

What some wealthy institution or patron should have done, the young artist has himself accomplished out of the results of a short but brilliant career, he loves his art ; he knows that others love it ; and he desires that the happiness of the possessors of his original paintings should be shared by a large circle of lovers of art. And, being a romantic, he desires no profit. He gives us this gallery of the most exquisite art, this product of his highest inspiration and craftsmanship and the finest achievement of colour reproduction, for what it costs.

For this the little world of lovers of pure painting will thank him. Were this foreword to this volume permitted to be more than a simple signal, it would dwell on what is within with greater enthusiasm ; on the skill that has achieved perfect assurance and extraordinary ease and on the passionate reserve and chaste intensity that are perhaps the most distinct contribution of the Persian and Mughal genius of the past and of Chughtai to-day to the art of India and the world.

It is perhaps the "Oriental" character of Chughtai's pictures that will win admirers for them outside Asia. Their amazing technical skill is acceptable to all who are sensitive to excellence achieved. But the remoteness from so-called realism which Chughtai has deliberately cultivated will be specially acceptable to those who are now feeling the pull away from an alleged truthfulness to eyesight, towards the truth of the imagination. This has been the mission of the Oriental art for ages, and a study of a set of Persian paintings (of which good reproductions can now be readily obtained) side by side with these of Chughtai, will show where they are at one in their mood of gentle repose, in their pictorial lyricism, and where Chughtai, with the impulse of the creative artist who has the sense of tradition, has made his wholly delightful and individual contribution. He retains the distinctive mood and of posture the Persian tradition but gives his pictures a special quality of his own in lovely colour combination, in delicious lines that seem to be less lines of painting than of some inaudible poetry made visible, in folds of drapery that are never mere coverings to or discoverings of the human body, but best men in the liturgy of beauty, in decorative backgrounds based on Saracenic architecture that call the imagination away from the tyranny of the actual into free citizenship of the realm of romance.

One would like to follow up these excellences from picture to picture, but space forbids. The wish must here be content with hand outstretched towards infinite riches in a little room and a profound salaam to the gifted artist.

JAMES H. COUSINS.

INTRODUCTION

by

RAZIA SIRAJ-UD-DIN

ORIENTAL ART has always been a prey to unjust criticism. The Western critics who are in the safe and reliable position of being the third disinterested party, gaze at it and pronounce their judgment not only with a lack of appreciation but with a positive note of disapproval. The more generous ones are certainly willing to approach it without any prejudice and praise it, not because they are convinced of its excellence but because they try to realize the possibility of its appeal to the Oriental mind.

The European critics regard Art more or less as a well-laid dinner table, and it is their perpetual grudge against the Oriental creative genius that while he provides them with the accessories of the table, such as the Jam, the Pickles, and the Sauce, the principal dish is missing. They admit that the delicate tit-bits placed before them are very palatable, but it is at the same time preposterous that any one should feed on that froth and bubble and get up from the table satisfied. They labour under the delusion that because most Islamic painters favour the frail and æsthetic looking figures, the theme of their paintings becomes purely conventional. They confuse, for instance, the luxurious dreaminess of a reclining posture with a fatalistic passivity. The fact is that the restless European craves more for action and variety, perpetual change of formulas and new development in art. He is always looking for a logical conclusion and a definite aim. To achieve a thing without the appearance of conflict has no value in his eyes. He would much rather sense a workman's fist in any piece of art, than a sublime and unseen power, which has no part in his personal experience. If he had to choose between two evils he would prefer a curt and premature conclusion to what he thinks is a dull monotony which goes on for ever. He who glories in stage settings and Drama, fails, to find anything satisfactory

and to the point in a motionless brook, a group of motionless flowers and human beings as impassive in their meditative stillness, no matter what great regions of thought they might be disclosing through their dreamy eyes. It is his firm belief that the Orientals have a formula which they have learnt by heart to such an extent that it has proved injurious to their individuality and creativeness. Their mind becomes so fixed in the repetition of this formula (which they try to vary by elaborate devices of ornamentation), that they fail to find out things for themselves. The Oriental taste for monotonous decoration is laid stress upon. The artist is accused of proceeding by comfortable and lazy superimposition. It is admitted that there are complications in his art, but these are not the result of any conflict of emotions. At best, they are intricate decorations cunningly handled by a master-juggler. A third dimension, a counter-point, is needed to make his art emotionally expressive. The Alhambra, says Mario Praz, produces that impression of precariousness as if at a strong puff of your lips the honey-combed cupolas should float away like thistledown and the embroidered walls be rent as easily as cobwebs. He does not add whether he tried this experiment or not, but I feel sure that if he had, the Alhambra would have held its ground, cobwebs and thistledown intact, as it has done for hundreds of years. He would have obtained more favourable results if he had puffed at King Charles' palace next to it and left Time to do the rest. Praz fails to see that Oriental Art can contain both eloquence of expression and the strength of dramatic activity,—that while preserving the formula which is a necessary foundation, it has ample scope for development and variety. What could be more appropriate as an example than the art of M. A. Rahman Chughtai who, although he is in the direct line of Mughal and Persian art, puts his vital individuality in all his work? The intricate little designs he so freely uses are not merely dumb decorations, but take an active part in the formation of his pictures by enhancing the importance of the 'subject' they surround and bringing out its details. They are expressive patterns instead of meaningless and superfluous lines. They are so characteristic of Chughtai that his less gifted contemporaries have inevitably failed in trying to copy them. His art is so complete, such a concentrated whole in itself, that no alien power is needed to lend it depth and expression.

Chughtai expresses himself by forming a line of thought and connecting it with all the objects in any particular picture. In doing so he achieves a perfect harmony of line and expression, which is one of his greatest assets.

There is no logic in the hasty conclusion that because a thing has the appearance of an unearthly daintiness it is lacking in vitality and emotional expression. It would be as relevant to say that only a stout and thick vessel can contain a rare and stimulating wine. As a matter of fact the so-called frailty of his art is really its strength. The delicate lines of Chughtai's pictures are by no means inspired or shaky but firm and precise with a marvellous neatness and a most careful exactness of material.

It is obvious, and should always be kept in mind, that Oriental Art does not pretend to be realistic in the photographic sense of the word. It never boasts of reproducing the exact likeness of a human face or figure, but has created for itself a symbolical motif as a substitute. Chughtai's figures are vividly alive and not merely beautiful designs. There are fleeting emotions in their mobile faces; their attitudes and gestures are full of meaning.

Since the word 'Drama' does not necessarily imply a display of exaggerated postures it can easily be proved that Chughtai's art is full of dramatic action. Its symbolical technique, however, demands a certain restraint in expression. The figures therefore are mostly drawn in an attitude modified by the dignity of repose and tranquillity. It does not however incapacitate

tate them from expressing themselves by more vital gestures, but they always have the appearance of just having done so, or planning to do so, and in this respect, although they are living in the present, they also have the power to remove themselves from it. The drama is implicit rather than explicit. In Chughtai's paintings one is conscious of the unique combination of three elements—the actual present, a most prophetic vision, and a revival of the past. Some one has said that a human face should either by a promise or a history. The faces of Chughtai's women contain both promise and history inextricably blended each with each. He never sacrifices the truth of situation and fidelity to details for the sake of conventional beauty. As a matter of fact there is much less formality in his art than in that of Raphaël and his school. The Florentine has so emphasized, cultivated and stereotyped his own ideal of the for-ever motherly Madonna, that (so subtle is the influence of fixed types in pictorial art upon the current standards of truth and beauty) the maternal function came to be regarded as the sole and sufficient object of a woman's existence, and the conventional Madonna face of Raphaël became a bondage from which Christianity took very long indeed to set itself free. The dominant motif of Christian mythology was woman as the respective and passive vehicle of the God-Man. The artist never presented woman as daughter, sister, lover or wife, apart from the concurrent idea of potential motherhood. This was a very serious limitation from the point of view of art and it is Chughtai's triumph that he suffers from no such bondage. His art is not in the thrall of the conventional, of the accepted canons of what should be perceived and how things ought to look in pictures.

In Chughtai's art you feel that the rational elements have been melted into the decorative. It is perfectly rational and yet purely decorative ; without ascertainable content and yet full of significance in the highest degree. His art is not a fabricated concoction nor is it merely an instinctive and inspired achievement, but the result of a careful selection of that which is essential to the development of his individuality and a rejection of all that is superfluous.

While studying the old Mughal and Persian Masters he discovered that they had a marvellous sense of " faces " and an almost psychic wisdom in the delineation of character. This he has most ardently preserved while their unsymmetrical perspective which gave their pictures the look of being upside down and possessing invisible staircases, did not quite agree with his more fastidious ideas of the harmony of gradual lines. So he changed these surroundings into more realistic ones, giving his pictures the accentuated beauty of ordinary things and a conscious idealization of that which is commonplace. The treatment of his colouring is entirely his own. He has introduced some new tones which would have appeared insipid to his ancestors, but give his paintings a singular freshness.

He seems to have lifted a third unnecessary layer of paint from the old Indian paintings to expose the second hitherto protected layer in all its clear softness and healthy glow.

The most distinctive feature of Chughtai's art is his line work. It is this which gives his pictures their exquisite fineness, their maturity and a perpetual look of elegance. It is worth while to notice the trend and flourish of these lines. They are never forced or abrupt but give one the feeling of continuity and expansion.

Chughtai's art has had a great reforming influence on his contemporaries. By setting an example he has encouraged them to break away from the ties of convention, to regard tradition in art not as something which must for ever be copied out faithfully to the minutest detail ; but as a well-laid foundation upon which to build up their particular talent and develop it according to their own creative instincts. He is convinced that nothing is more ridiculous than to make an

artist a dictator. He has opened the gates and made straight the way, but as a guide, not a commander : Truth lies open to all. I'll have no man addict himself to me, he says in the spirit of Ben Jonson—for too many things a man should owe but a temporary belief and not an absolute resignation of himself or a perpetual captivity. It is to Chughtai's credit that he refuses to be enslaved by his own triumphs : the key-note of his art is Development. He is not content to rest on his laurels—witness his latest book *Naqsh-i-Chughtai* and the *Book of Chughtai* and *Omar Khayyam* still in progress. He claims for himself the right of free thought in the realm of art and he allows that right to others : it is with him a question not of authorities but of truth.

His line work and his designs, although not easy to imitate, have pointed out to the Indian artist of to-day the right method and significance of their use, and the amount of importance which should be attached to decorative material in painting.

Having chosen water colour as his medium, he has taken great pains to preserve the light texture and airiness so urgently associated with it. He has never been tempted to use it as a transparent layer of oil colours in order to produce a certain pleasing effect.

He is precise and firm in his choice : when he uses a copper brown he means a copper brown and his pinks are unhesitatingly pink. Nothing is left to chance and no age-old Whistlerian conventions are observed. To appreciate Chughtai in any high degree one must appreciate pure form, rhythmical proportions, the relations of parts, and extreme refinements in these relations. He hates the vague and uncertain, loving to see with his mind's eye as clearly as with the eye of sense the geometer sees his triangles, his circles and his squares. His paintings are in truth the Geometry of beauty. He knows that art begins at the point when the thousandth of an inch makes all the difference.

RAZIA SIRAJ-UD-DIN.



Jahanara and the Taj.

Jahanara and the Taj :

This picture has an unusual peculiarity of its own, and a subtle precision of design which is present in all the paintings of Chughtai. The peculiarity lies in the meticulous care with which he has drawn out the architectural details of the columns and their arches in the background. The whole effect is, technically, too perfect and realistic to be entirely oriental in style. It is only when you look at the lady that you become conscious of the mystic orientalism of the picture. She crouches and her draperies spread out in the foreground like a huge fan.

It is interesting to note that through the very act of giving the structure of the building a detailed accuracy and a look of ornamentation, the artist has accentuated the dark and shadowy form of the woman, painting her draperies a dark warm brown, so untouched and clear (except for a few necessary details), that it looks like one block of colour contrasting strangely with the clearly marked cool green of the pillars. The glistening marble seat is the counterbalance of the whole composition for it establishes the necessary distance between the figure and the short wall, giving and added lightness and purity to the clearly outline profile, at the same time emphasising the darkness of the dress and the sky.

It is an arresting and convincing study because of its unusual angle (for the picture does not face us, but the vast distance towards which the woman is looking) and a certain philosophic calm.





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Dawn in the Himalayas.
The artist's brush has captured the essence of the Himalayas at dawn. The scene is a masterpiece of light and shadow, with the sun's rays filtering through the misty valleys and illuminating the snow-capped peaks. The colors are soft and ethereal, creating a sense of tranquility and awe. The composition is balanced and harmonious, with the mountains dominating the background and the foreground showing the details of the landscape. The overall effect is one of natural beauty and grandeur, a true reflection of the Himalayas' majesty.

Dawn in the Himalayas.

Dawn in the Himalayas :

Just a clever symbolic design, worked out in soft pastel colouring and circular lines round a triangle motif. The figure does not stand out in the foreground as a human element but as an object which fits in with the background to accentuate the general atmosphere of the picture.





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**The Pilgrims:**

This study is remarkably even in texture. The lower portion of the old man's form and the complete figure of the boy are drawn out entirely with a tinge of white on the point of the brush, but because there is no thickening of paint or unnecessary emphasis in any other part of the picture, the two figures have been miraculously saved from becoming transparent and obscure.





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Sukut-i-Shab :

The pale face looking up through the soft atmosphere of the picture is intensified by the bright yellow flowers on the ground and on the branch behind the figure. The small book bears a relationship to the head drawing attention to its size : likewise the cypress trees drawn in the middle lend symmetry and height to the picture. Unlike most of Chughtai's paintings, there is not much decorative drawing here, the impression being more of a blend of colouring than of a marked precision of lines.



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Maryan :

The blending of the saffron complexion with the rosy tint of the picture is carried out with a soft finish. The profile is perfectly drawn and singularly life-like. Observe the note of mischief lurking in the corner of the mouth and the eye, both pointing upwards. The brow sloping down-wards and meeting above the nose lends a quizzical expression to the face and gives it an air of mystery. The details in the picture harmonize perfectly with one another, the round ear-rings, the handle of the fan, the stray locks of hair—all have something in common. The hand (holding the fan with a coquettish gesture) is in keeping with the face.





Sunder Valley.

**Sunder Valley :**

Remarkable for its neat freshness and the cool wintry feeling reposing in the valley. The lady, however, quaint and unrealistic she may be, has a look on her face and stands in an attitude familiar to us all—the look of some one silently admiring a particular scene for the first time. As to her draperies, they are exquisitely drawn; the folds of her head-dress overlapping the corners are perfect in every detail. Notice the harmony between the colouring of this garment and the tiny domed houses in the distance. The picture can be divided into two parts, each part serving as a suitable background for the two figures.





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The Cypress Girl.

The Cypress Girl :

The stage-design quality of this study would make it an excellent mural, or a fresco, or even a piece of tapestry. A dream-world atmosphere is produced by the photogravure tint, and the slender cypress trees dotted about on the landscape in such a charmingly nonchalant manner. Here is an arrested motion cleverly depicted by the dramatic flourish of the "Girl's" arms. This is the sort of picture one would like to look at, again and again, marvelling at its decorative perfection, and trying to unravel the mystery which surrounds it.







The Young Hermit :

You are at once attracted by the disproportion of the hermit's figure, yet this is a necessary exaggeration to bring out his attitude of meek submission. Special attention should be paid to the enlarged arms in their encircling movement and the rather timid hands resting devoutly on the stick. Strange though it may seem, distortion of the lower part of the body does not seem incongruous and you do not feel that the head is disconnected from it, however small it may be. Therefore, in forming a connection between two inexact and disproportionate parts of the body, the artist has succeeded in introducing a new metaphysical technique.





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Princess of Sahara.

Princess of Sahara :

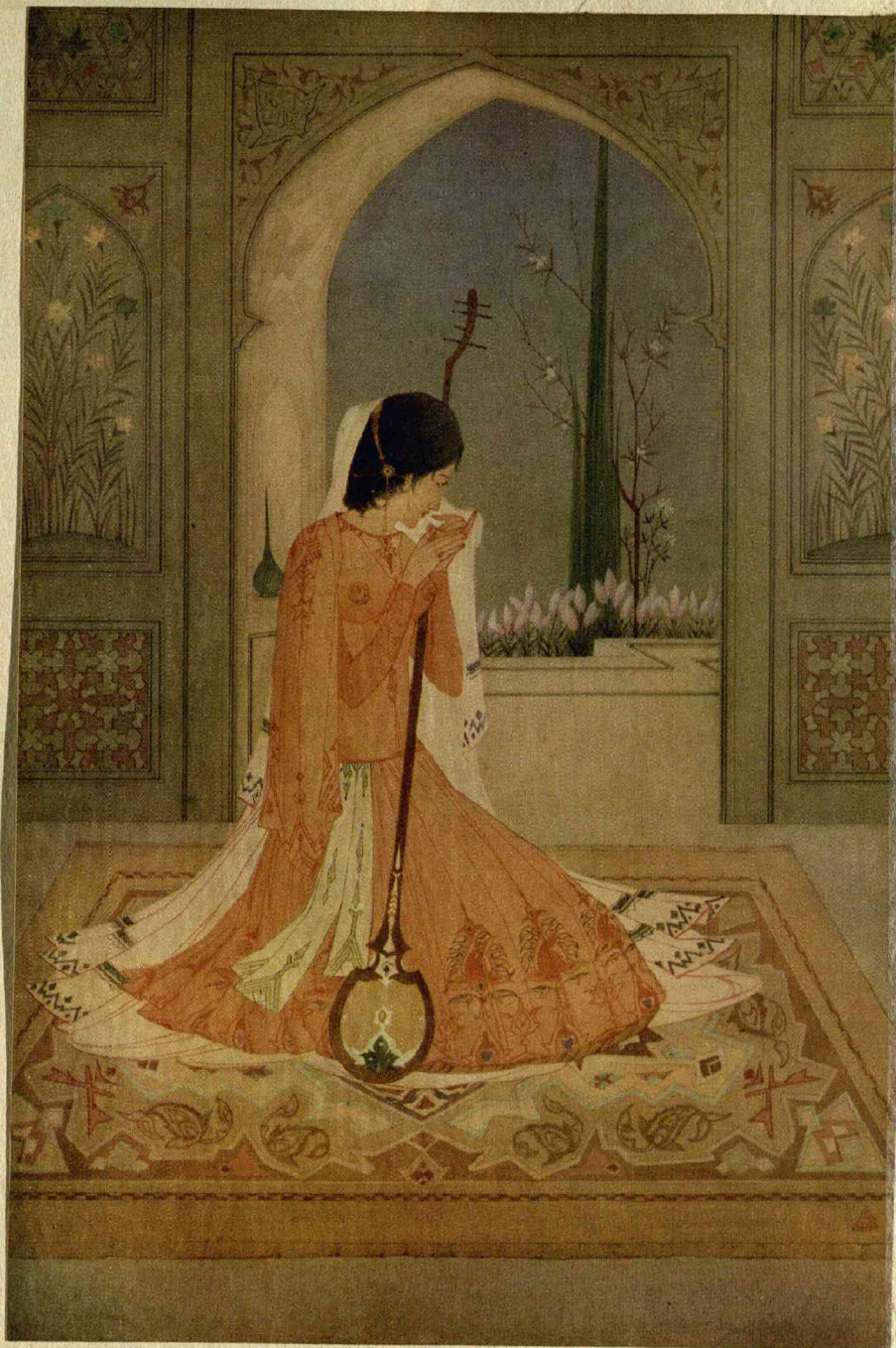
This is one of the pictures which confirm us in the belief that Chughtai is at his best when he uses the brush—the composition and interweaving of its lines is so characteristic of him. Notice the selfsatisfied expression on both the lady's and the camel's face, as if he, a princess's camel, has borrowed from her some of the haughty pride of her position. She spreads out her hands in a gesture expressive of her grace and dignity. You feel from her sitting posture that if she were to get up her walk would be slow and rhythmical. The light grey and brown tints of the picture harmonize with each other, giving it the look of elegant decoration.



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**A Persian Idyll :**

The lady with the musical instrument, you must observe, is not sitting quite in the middle of the arch, yet the first thing which draws your attention is her head and the picture seems to join there from different angles. The garments of the lady are not deeper in tone than the rest of the picture, yet she definitely stands out through little tricks of composition and clever use of colour, especially the darkening of the Sitar, the hair, the little bottle of scent and the cypress tree outside





**Observation :**

Notice the little design formed above the pyramid in the middle. It seems to take the mother and child in its fold and helps in the grouping of its details. The element of humour is soberly introduced, with a strange combination of the grave and the gay.





Gusain Tulsidas.



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Gusain Tulsidas :

Another of what I might call the atmospheric pictures of Chughtai, in which the soul is curiously detached from the body, and creates a hazy atmosphere around it by mixing with the external elements. It appears as though the sky, and the ground are just the mental and spiritual parts of Tulsidas' being (the elevated and dreamy atmosphere which a poet creates for himself), while his material body stands in the midst of it. The picture has a curiously after-one's-death effect, chiefly because of its unearthly colouring.





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**The Flame of Love :**

The lady's emotions are expressed through the uplifted arms in their rather desperate and supplicant gesture. The comparatively subdued colouring and round effect of the body, emphasize the length, and brightened tone of the arms. These, and the flick of the lamp are the only two vividly alive objects in the picture.





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**The Saqi :**

Chughtai has a trick of making his golden brown lumiuous and glowingly soft which give to his pictures a look of eternal daintiness. Here he has managed to do so by contrasting his brown with a dark slate-grey, and it appears that the lower part of the picture is lit up by an invisible light. In spite of her rather inconspicuous face and statuesque from the "Saqi", gives the impression of being a creature of flesh and blood. Because she occupies the whole of the central part of the picture, she appears to pose for the artist, and therefore becomes important and realistic not through her substance, but by her capacity to draw our thoughts to her.





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The Carpet Girl
The story is a beautiful and moving tale of a young girl who is orphaned and sold into slavery. She is taken to a distant land where she is forced to work in a carpet factory. Despite the harsh conditions and the cruelty of her masters, she manages to find a way to escape and return to her homeland. The story is a testament to the power of love and the human spirit.

The Carpet Girl.

**The Carpet Girl :**

The artist in a lighter mood when he relaxes, creates a neat and appealing little design, purely for its decorative value. It is understood that the painting has no definite aim or ambition except to give a certain æsthetic pleasure through its warm colouring and intricate pattern.





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The Old Lamp.

The Old Lamp :

The face of the old man is yet another medium through which the artist has proved that a face painted in the symbolic style can be expressive and mobile. For then it can signify a special type with lean Asiatic features.



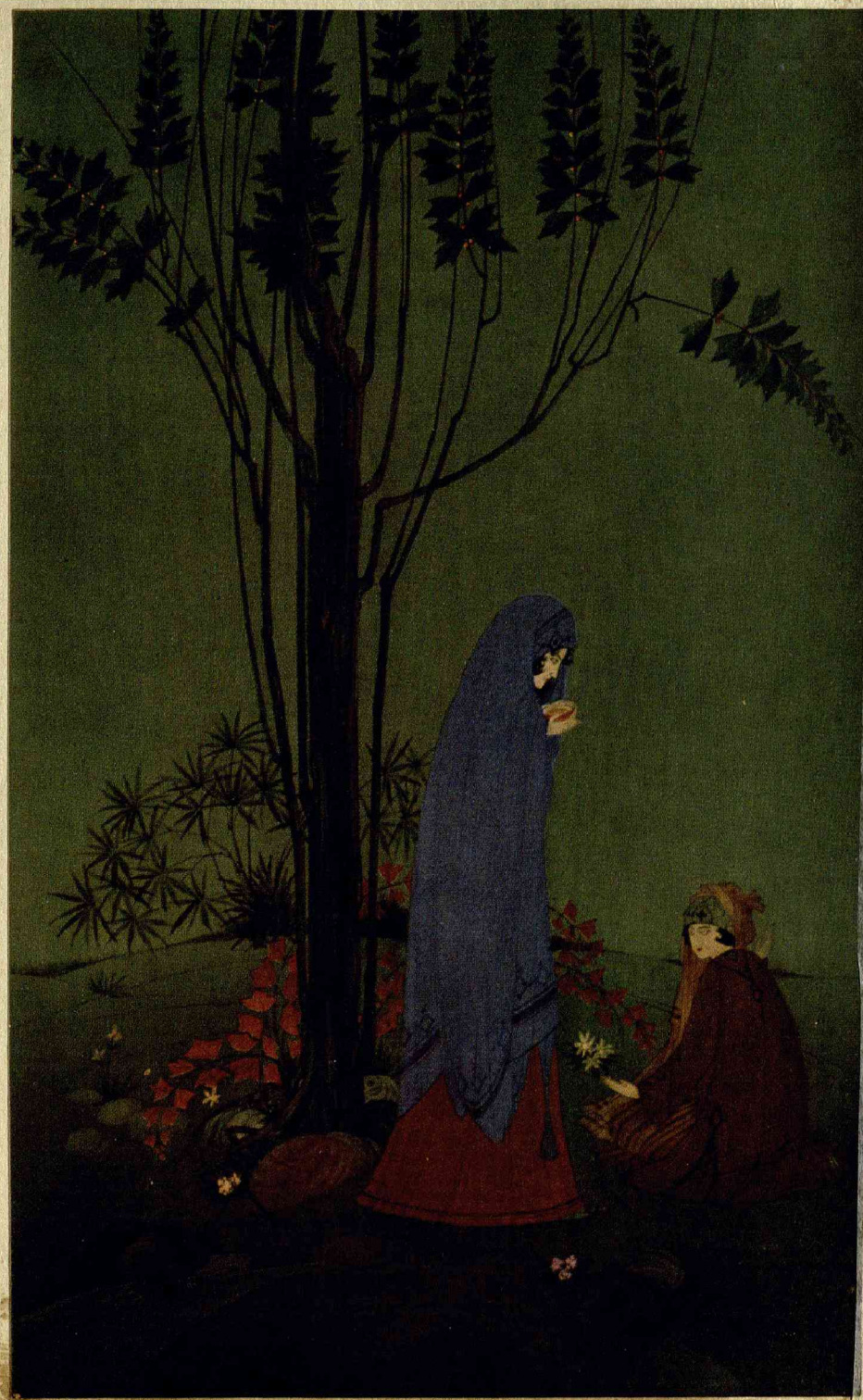


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The Flower-Gatherers :

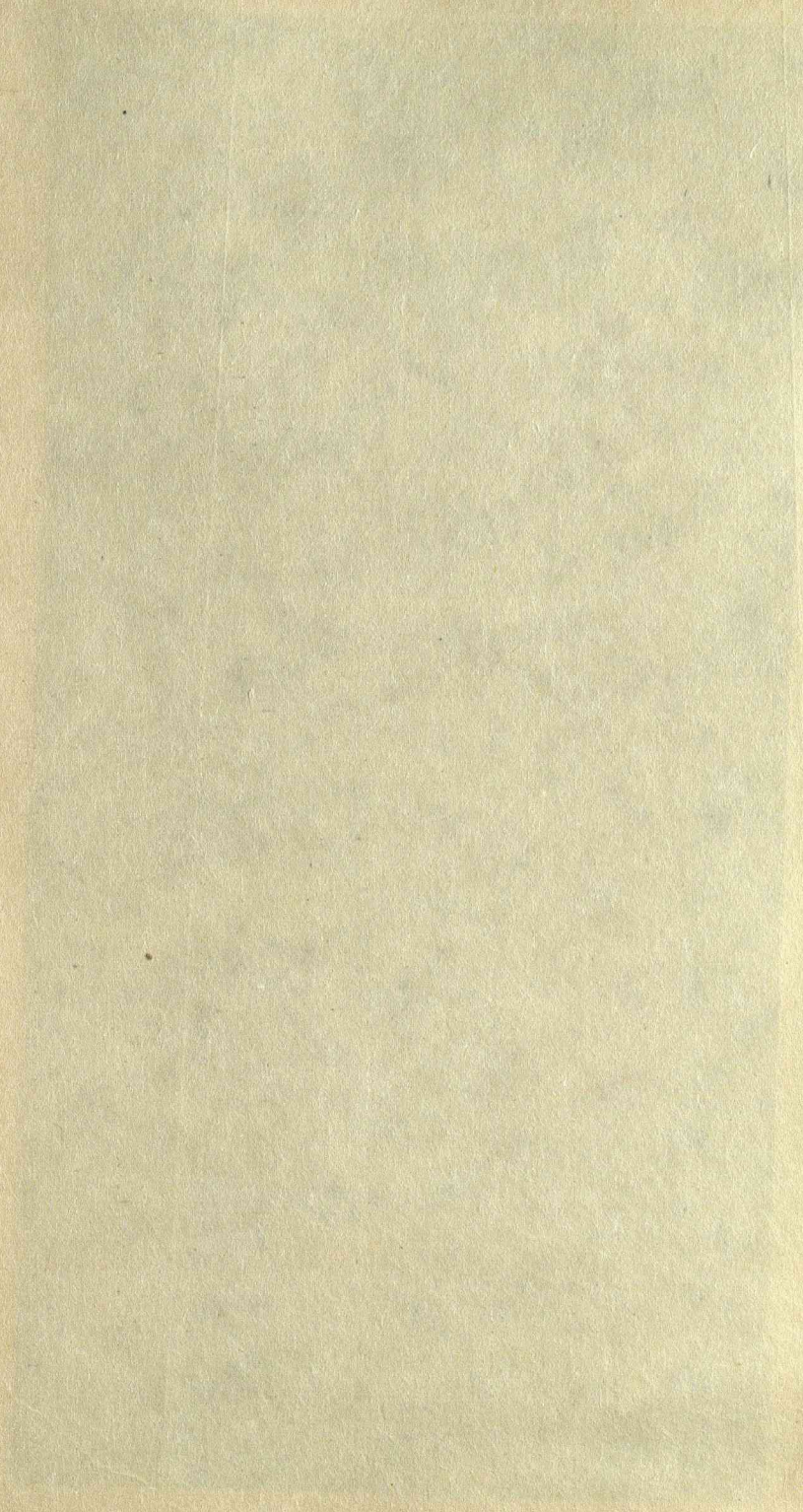
Quite apart from its usually expressive colouring, this painting is full of tranquillity and dainty charm. The tree adds to the importance of the figures underneath and gathers the whole picture up with the aid of its trunk. It also uplifts and lengthens the woman's figure, and by its own exquisitely shaped stalks and leaves lends a certain delicacy to the flowers and leafy bushes under it.

The artist has wonderfully captured the twilight atmosphere by emphasizing the greenness of the background by painting the leaves in the same darker shade of green, and then contrasting it with the blue veil of the woman and the illuminated faces. A feeling of faintly twinkling stars is produced although they are not actually visible.





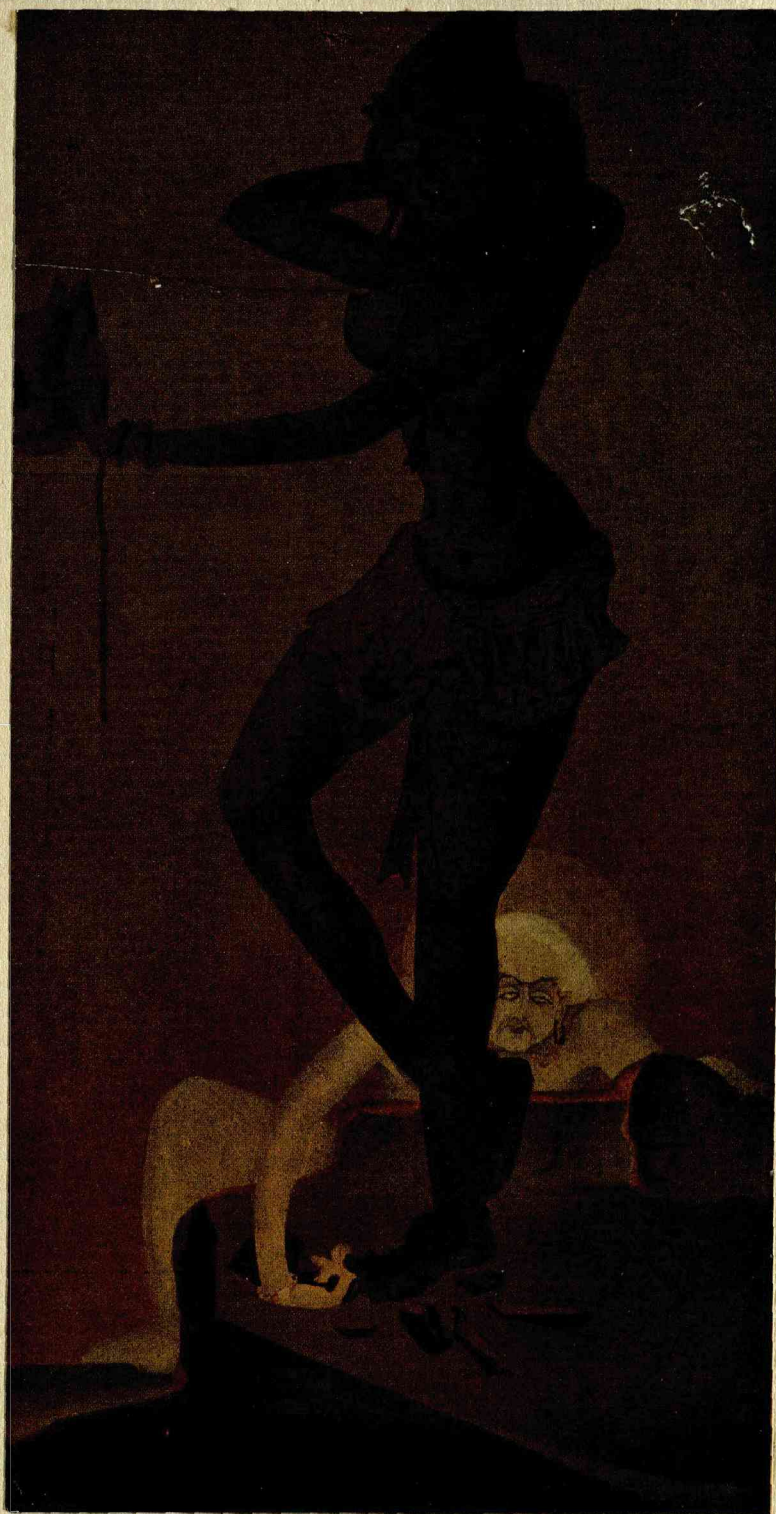
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A Piece of Stone.

A Piece of Stone :

This picture has a definite Pabstian angle, not only, in its construction but also in the perverse reflex-action colouring. It is the large looming grey passivity of the statue which makes the sculptor almost frighteningly alive.





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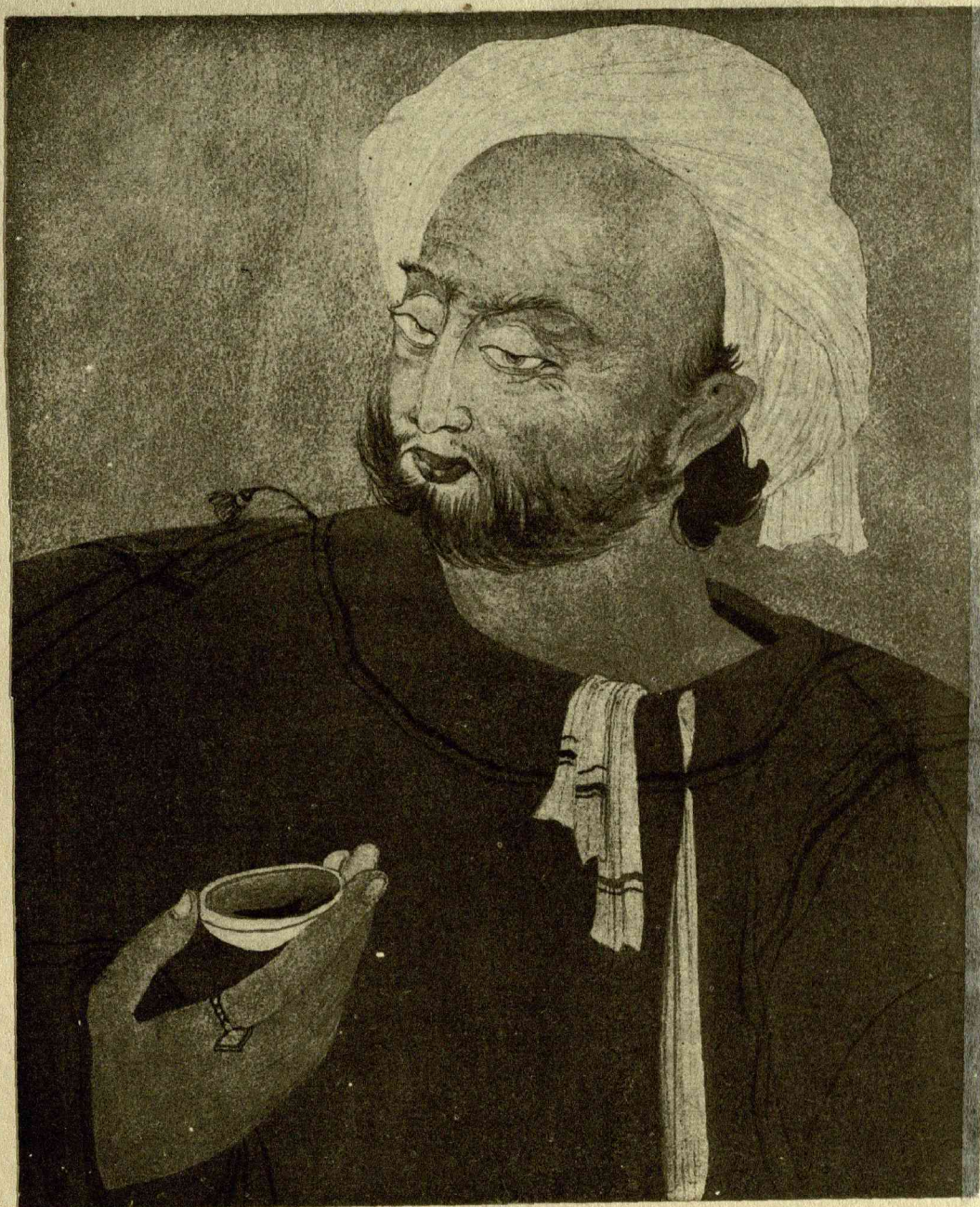
The Erthen Bowl.



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The Earthen Bowl :

Rather an unusual sort of a face for Chughtai to draw ; it has none of the long lean and thin characteristics of most of his faces and certainly not the expression of his spiritual and refined aesthetes. This is the face of a bourgeois, short and rotund with a rather Chinese fullness of the lips.





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Pride of the Valley :

Here is a picture which recalls to one's mind the western impressionistic school of painting. It has captured a warm vivacity of style, and has a bold frankness of expression surprisingly naked and stripped of ornamentation—rather unusual for an artist who generally paints in the traditional Oriental style. It suggests possibilities for a new school of Indian painting, and is one of the most progressive paintings of Chughtai.



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On the Window Sill :

Notable for its arresting blue which is rather an unusual colour for Chughtai to use. A glow of warmth has been lent to the background by the coppery brown of the tunic, which is an inspiration in itself. No other colour would have contracted so successfully with this particular shade of blue. The dazzling fair face with its crown of black hair, acts as a liaison object between the upper and lower part of the picture ; it links them together and strikes an individual note at the same time. Although the face does not pretend to be realistic in the photographic sense of the word, it is alive and establishes a contact with you. This impression is produced by the eyes, the pupils of which are placed with such accurate precision that they hold you with a magnetic look.

We know that the lady is on the window sill, but she is not pining away in a mood of despondency ; on the contrary there is an air of jaunty self confidence about her. Do not miss the side-lock which dangles coquettishly through the fingers of her right hand.





CSL

The Young Poet.

The Young Poet :

The artist has given this picture a hothouse quality. Owing to the truly anæmic and lustre-lack face of the poet, a world of morbidity (in which the shadowy lady plays a prominent part) is created. With his thin nose and the growth of hair at the nape of his neck, he looks a poet, but living in a world of imagery and dreams, has himself become unreal. His eyes seem to look beyond what they see, making us concentrate on his thoughts rather than on his appearance. Observe the triple colouring with the strip of mauve in the turban and the cuffs ; it has a crystal-like purity.





CSL

Flowers of Yesterday.



Flowers of Yesterday :

Notable for its perspective. The old man is obviously composed in a lighter shade than the sombre brown of the picture but that is not the only reason why he is so conspicuous. The big trees loom up before him and form a sort of semi-circle, thus bringing out his triangular figure in detail. The white flowers at the foot of the tree and behind him and the little white domed houses in the distance are all supporting the old man as it were; he would be quite lost without them. The tree itself is not painted in the usual decorative style. It is realistic and substantial, making the old man appear frail and pathetic by contrast. In using burnt-sienna for his colour scheme the artist has shown remarkable understanding of tone value. Observe how cleverly he has lightened the middle portion of the picture.





1966
CSL

The Captive Bird.

**The Captive Bird :**

We feel a subtle undercurrent of disharmony between the two living objects. Here is the figure of a woman more substantial and realistic than most of Chughtai's dream ladies.

There is a combination of hopeful expectation and disappointment in the bird's attitude which is due to the exaggerated curve of its left wing and the tail-tilted sideways. The enquiring little head is expectant and the tail slightly drooping in disappointment. The lack of sympathy is established between the bird and its mistress. They seem two figures in the same surroundings interested in two different things and their ideas do not coincide. The dull pink and burnt umber are well combined ; the unusual leaves and the finely drawn stalks are necessary touches to bring out the decorative side of the painting.





CSL

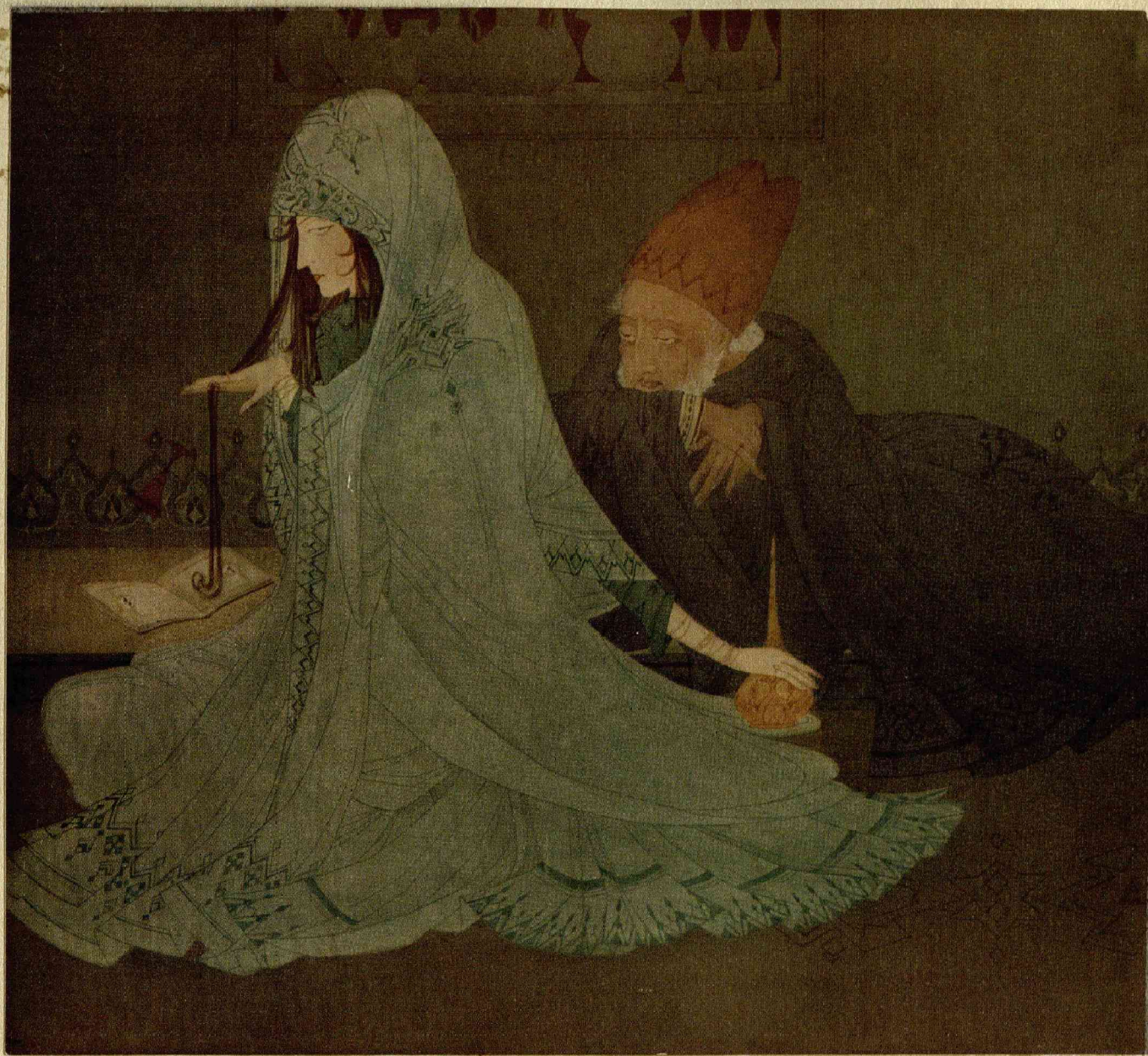
The Poet's Vision.

The Poet's Vision.



The Poet's Vision :

There is one factor in all the paintings of Chughtai which is so consistent and usual that it hardly needs comment, and that is his composition. Here is an artist who knows the value of a line and gets the most out of it. There is in this picture a refinement and maturity of composition and colour which gives it an almost lurid sophistication. Notice the colouring, the dull sea-green and mauve. Is it an alusion to wine and grapes, I wonder ?





CSL



The Music Lesson :

The design at the base of the picture helps to balance the lower part of it with the upper-half which is naturally more detailed in drawing.





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CSL

**The Brimming Cup :**

One of the more clearly defined, and strongly coloured pictures of Chughtai. The blue is one of the colours he very seldom uses. Notice the clever way in which he has brought down a fragment of it to the middle of the picture, to make the corner a little less conspicuous by its self-contained tone.





122
CSL

The Wasted Vigil :

Notable for its colour harmony. The blue-grey and the brown have such an affinity with each other that both the colours seem to have a layer of the other underneath. This effect is more pronounced in the blue-grey because it is a lighter shade. It is remarkable the way in which the draperies have covered up certain anatomical defects in the posture of the woman. By the downward sweep at her back they give us the impression at least, that she has her back towards us, although the face is definitely turned too much towards us for this particular posture.





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CSL

" The Tutor " :

The picture is composed in three tones. There is a vague brown tint (of the arch and of the turban of the boy standing on the left) ; the chief medium in which the tutor is drawn ; and the fewer dark tints in the hair of the grouped figures. It is remarkable that in so short a space, three boys have been so freely drawn as to give us the idea of sitting behind one another. They seem to be carved out of one stone but with such a sense of fore-shortening and darkening of the lines that they are separated from each other at the same time. The tutor, judging from his face and the hand stroking his beard, has a problem of his own to think out. Notice his curved back and his costume purposely spread out on the ground and elegantly decorated to keep up the balance of lines with the other half of the picture.



A Serenade
The song is for the night, the moon is high, the stars are bright, the night is sweet, the night is fair, the night is young, the night is old, the night is new, the night is true, the night is false, the night is all that is, the night is all that was, the night is all that shall be, the night is all that is, all that was, and all that shall be.

A Serenade :

Remarkable for its minute decorations and the continuity of its lines. It has a slightly Egyptian look, with its death-like colouring and the palm tree outside. The boyish timidity of the ardent lover is cleverly contrasted with the over-languorous manner of his lady-love. Notice the long, delicate line rising above her thighs and leading to her rounded breast. You feel the beauty of the pattern in the blue rug and the lady's pink and cream dress. To lend a touch of decision to this pure and untouched colouring the artist has carefully worked out a design at the edge of the veil in a harmonizing blue, which is also seen in the pattern on the wall.





13

CSL



**Life :**

Just a few flame-coloured lines, a deep brown background and a pink flower and yet all these have been juggled into a lyrical rendering of such a threateningly serious subject. The Lotus insistently reminds one of an imp of mischief, who has stolen a terribly precious thing and is running away with it. There is something hurried and swift in the movement of the Lotus, which is chiefly due to the curling smoke flung backwards by the wind. Notice the way the tree has been twisted and distorted to bring out the fresh beauty of the flower.



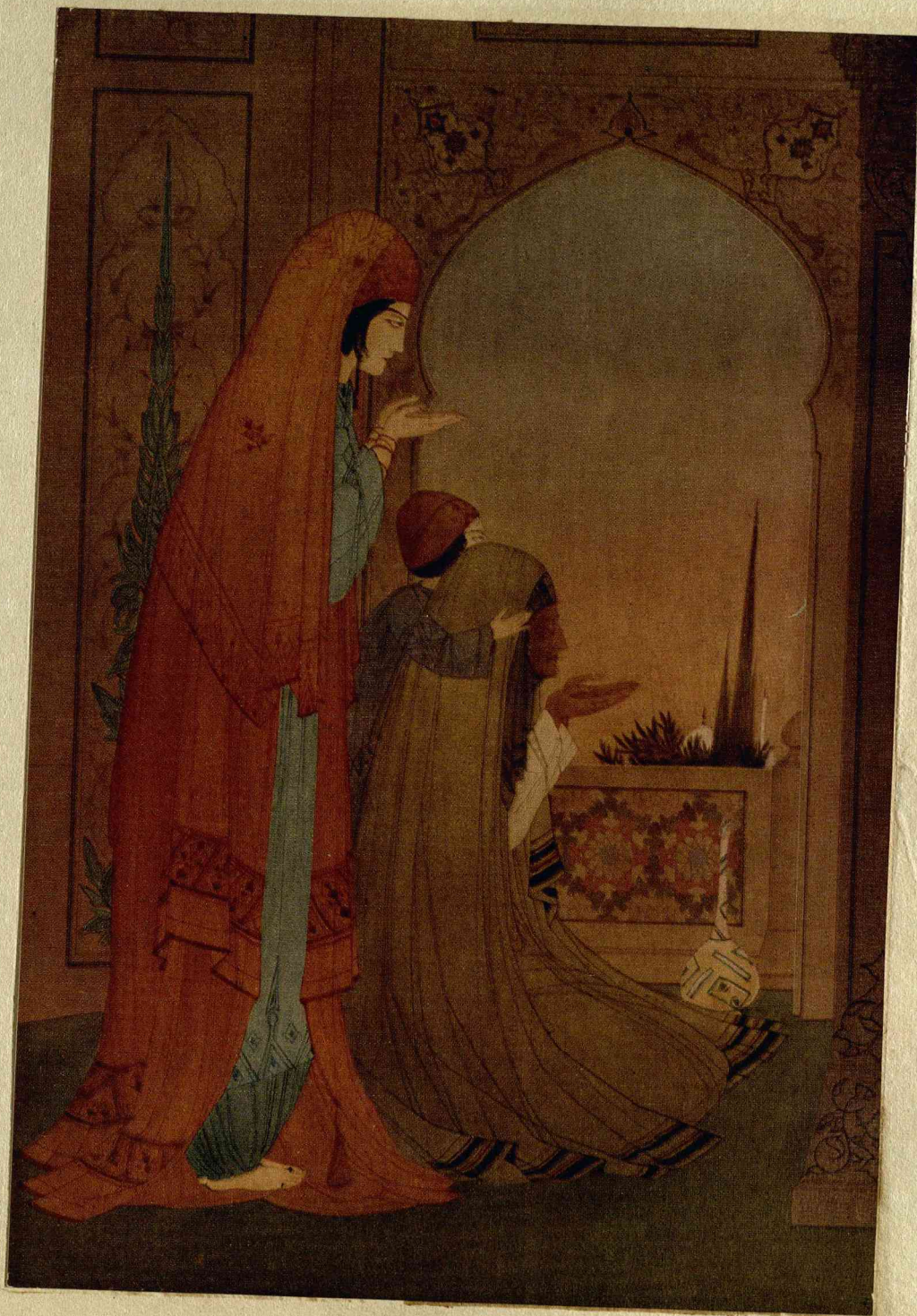
138
CSL

The I'd Moon.

The I'd Moon.

**The I'd Moon :**

A study in facial expression. The old woman wears a smile of satisfaction, of having lived her life and known its joys and sorrows. The younger one has an eager look of expectation and is wondering what the future might bring. The child, with the non-chalance of youth, is indifferent to the emotions of both. The colouring denotes a warm evening with its subdued reddish tints.





CSL

with the most perfect and beautiful of all the things that God has made. The great is just as important for
the human mind as the material world. The great is just as important for the human mind as the material world.

Vanity.

Vanity :

A brief yet intricate composition, very well-balanced and becomingly grouped with the side of all the decorative articles necessary for the toilet. The chair is just as important for the plan of the picture as a second figure.





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CSL

The Song Offering.

The Song Offering :

There is a certain symmetry and elegance of composition which makes this picture doubly striking. The figures are so grouped together that they look like two triangles in one large circle, and this geometrical treatment has been carried out in the rest of the painting. The short brown pillars divide the upper half into three squares and the sweeping branches trisect them with an equal number of triangles. The lower portion is laid out entirely on parallel lines, the lady's long tassel and the cypress tree being in harmony with the pillars. Notice the connection formed between the Nightingale, the tiny black pot and the tassels, as if an invisible line had joined these objects together. The outstretched arms give expanse to the lady's figure, taking away that look of obscurity produced by the numerous folds of her drapery. Pink is always a difficult colour to use, as it has an individuality of its own and the artist must use colours which harmonize with it. The light-brown, the dark-brown, the white, the grey-blue and the lady's unusually fair complexion are all there to serve the purpose of harmonizing with the pink.





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The Extinguished Flame :

One of Chughtai's most expressive paintings : it has inspiration as well as the perfection of technique. One feels that silence breathes here and all the objects harmonize with one another in a state of suspended animation. And yet there are no grey or soft blue tints to induce this feeling in us, no softening down of tone, and no repression of line. The feeling, therefore, is created by the attitude of the figure in its perfect abandonment. The outstretched hands and the drooping coils of hair contribute to the atmosphere. Think of the picture in terms of a triangle surrounded by parallel lines and you will realize the perfection of its composition. The triangle is formed by the flat line at the base of the figure and those rising up from both ends of it to meet in a point at the top of the lamp. The parallel lines are formed by the archless doorway. The tall lamp itself occupies a prominent position and the ornamental wine jar further away from it is needed to accentuate its sombre stateliness.





15B1

CSL



The Web of Life.

The Web of Life.

**The Web of Life :**

Here is a picture which has a sense of mystery, and at the same time much illustrative value ; it indicates something definite leaving at the same time a great deal to the imagination of the observer. The thoughtful and philosophic face and bearing of the old man, as well as the entangled branches of the tree in the background, are enough to express the complexities of life.





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CSL

THE RESTING PLACE.

The Resting Place :

The picture is more tranquil than haunting. As a matter of fact, it is the figure with its unearthly gesture and mask-like face which gives it a haunting aspect: but for that the atmosphere would have been peaceful, cool and serene. The human figure is a hostile factor and a disturbing element. Notice the fan-like flowers at the tomb, rising above the wall.





The Desert in Bloom.

The Desert in Bloom :

This picture infuses one with a warm feeling for which the coppery background is chiefly responsible. The bloom is actually felt although there is an absence of flowers or even flowery leaves from the general composition. But the details are in themselves so bright, so full of light and colour that the spirit of a garden in spring is somehow transferred to articles, such as the bottle of wine, the colourful turbans, the smooth stones, the details of the lady's dress and the feathery little bush at her back. The group of flowers in the foreground was necessary for carrying out the element of brightness to the duller part of the picture. See how clearly the idea of distance between the woman and the group of men behind the tree, is conveyed, by making her figure bigger and upright and theirs fore-shortened by their sitting postures. Here again is an instance of four figures being squeezed in a very short space but without a look of being cramped or thrust together, so remarkably are they composed. Their attitudes express a languorous enjoyment and the feeling is so infectious that it gives the picture a profound æsthetic appeal, a fragrance rare and warm.





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